



NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll: Romney by One Point in Tight Contest in Virginia

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This NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll Reports:

After last week's presidential debate, Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan have 48% compared with 47% for President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, among Virginia likely voters, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted absentee. One percent supports another candidate, and 4% are undecided.

"Virginia has been moving Romney's way, and that has continued post debate," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "Among the three battleground states we're looking at today -- Virginia, Florida, and Ohio -- Virginia is Romney's best state."

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's previous survey released last week just before the debate, Obama and Biden had the backing of 48% of likely voters in Virginia, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and voted absentee. 46% supported Romney and Ryan. One percent was for another candidate, and 5%, at that time, were undecided.

Key points:

- **Party ID.** 96% of Democrats who are likely to vote are for Obama while 94% of Republicans likely to go to the polls are behind Romney. Among independent likely voters, Romney -- 50% -- is ahead of Obama -- 42%. Romney has experienced a bump among independents. In last week's survey, Romney received 45% of these voters to 44% for Obama.
- **Enthusiasm.** More than six in ten likely voters in Virginia -- 64% -- are very enthusiastic about voting next month. Among Obama's supporters, 66% have a high level of enthusiasm compared with 65% of Romney's backers.
- **Intensity of support.** 86% of likely voters are firmly committed to their choice of candidate. 11% somewhat support their pick, and 2% might vote differently. One percent is unsure. Looking at the candidates' supporters, 88% of those who are

behind Obama are firmly in his camp. This compares with 84% of Romney's backers who strongly support him.

- **Gender.** A gender gap exists. 54% of women who are likely to vote support Obama compared with 42% for Romney. Little has changed among women over the last week. 52% of women supported Obama, then, compared with 44% for Romney. However, there has been a change among men who are likely to vote. Here, Romney receives 55% to 40% for Obama. In last week's survey, men divided. 48% backed Romney compared with 45% for Obama.
- **Age.** Obama -- 66% -- leads Romney -- 29% -- among likely voters under 30. Looking at those 30 to 44, there is a divide. Obama has 48% to 46% for Romney. Obama has lost some support among this age group. In last week's NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll, 55% backed Obama compared with 39% for Romney. Romney -- 54% -- is ahead of the president -- 41% -- among likely voters 45 to 59. Looking at likely voters 60 and older, 52% back Romney while 44% are for Obama.

Among registered voters in Virginia, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, Romney has the support of 47% to 47% for Obama. One percent is behind another candidate, and 5% are undecided.

The Impact of the Debates

When did Virginia likely voters make their decision about which candidate to support? 91% made their choice before last Wednesday's debate. Seven percent did so after the debate, and 2% are unsure.

Looking at each candidate's support, 93% of likely voters who back the president made their selection before the debate compared with 6% who decided after the matchup. Among Romney's supporters, 90% made their selection pre-debate while 8% did so post-debate.

While 88% of independent likely voters chose a candidate pre-debate, one in ten -- 10% -- picked a candidate after the debate.

When it comes to the details of the debate, 61% of registered voters mostly watched the debate. 23%, however, mostly viewed news coverage about it. 15% of Virginia registered voters did not watch the debate nor follow the news about it.

Young voters in Virginia were less likely to watch the debate than older voters. 56% of registered voters 30 to 44, 63% of those 45 to 59, and 71% of those 60 and older watched the debate unfold. This compares with 45% of those under the age of 30. Among this group, 30% followed news coverage about it while 25% neither saw the debate nor watched the news for the details of the encounter.

Majority Still Views Obama Favorably...Romney Experiences Bump in Favorable Rating

51% of Virginia likely voters have a favorable opinion of President Obama. 45% do not, and 3% are unsure.

In last week's NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll in Virginia, 52% thought well of Obama. 44% had an unfavorable impression of him, and 4% were unsure.

There has been an improvement in Romney's favorability rating. 49% have a positive impression of him while 44% have an unfavorable one. Seven percent are unsure.

When NBC News/WSJ/Marist last reported this question a week ago, Romney's favorability rating was upside down. 45% had a favorable view of Romney while 47% had an *unfavorable* opinion of the candidate. Eight percent, at that time, were unsure.

Perceptions of the Running Mates Pre-Debate

44% of likely voters in Virginia have a positive impression of Vice President Joe Biden. This compares with 46% who have an *unfavorable* view of him. 10% are unsure.

In last week's survey, 44% of likely voters had a favorable opinion of Biden. 45% had an unfavorable one, and 11% were unsure.

Looking at Paul Ryan's image, 44% think well of him while 40% do not. 16% are unsure.

When NBC News/WSJ/Marist last reported this question, 45% of likely voters had a positive opinion of Ryan while 41% had a less than stellar impression of him. 14% had either never heard of him or were unsure how to rate him.

Romney and Obama Close on Economy...Obama with Advantage Over Romney on Foreign Policy

Among registered voters in Virginia, 47% think Romney is the better candidate to turn around the country's economy. 45% say Obama is the stronger candidate on the issue. Eight percent are unsure. Likely voters share these views. 48% of these voters believe Romney is better suited to deal with the nation's economy. This compares with 45% who say Obama is more prepared to deal with the issue. Eight percent are unsure.

In last week's poll, 46% of registered voters thought Romney would better handle the issue of the economy while 45% said Obama would. Nine percent, at that time, were unsure.

On the issue of foreign policy, Obama -- 49% -- has the advantage over Romney -- 43% -- among registered voters statewide. Eight percent are unsure. Similar proportions of likely

voters share these views. 49% of Virginia likely voters believe Obama is the stronger candidate on the issue compared with 44% who say Romney is better prepared to deal with this area. Seven percent are unsure.

In last week's NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll, Obama -- 50% -- led Romney -- 41% -- on this question among Virginia registered voters. At that time, 9% were unsure.

Obama Approval Rating at 48% in Virginia

48% of registered voters in Virginia approve of the job President Obama is doing in office while 46% believe he is falling short. Six percent are unsure.

In NBC News/WSJ/Marist's survey earlier this month, the same proportion -- 48% -- applauded the president's job performance. 45% disapproved, and 6% were unsure.

Nation Needs a New Course, Says Majority

53% of registered voters in Virginia report the nation is moving in the wrong direction. However, 43% believe the country's trajectory is correct. Four percent are unsure.

Similar proportions held this view in last week's NBC News/WSJ/Marist Poll in Virginia. 53% said the country was on the wrong path while 42% said it was on the right one. Five percent were unsure.

Competitive Race for U.S. Senate in Virginia

47% of likely voters in Virginia, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted absentee, support Democrat Tim Kaine in the U.S. Senate race in the state. This compares with 46% for Republican George Allen. Seven percent are undecided.

The race has tightened. Last week, 49% of likely voters, including those who were undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee ballot, backed Kaine while 44% were for Allen. Seven percent, at that time, were undecided.

Among registered voters in Virginia, including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate and those who voted by absentee, Kaine receives the support of 47%, and Allen garners 45%. Seven percent are undecided.